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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

March 20, 1979

File
H.R.

MEMORANDUM FOR: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI
FROM: ROBERT PASTOR *RP*
SUBJECT: U.S. Policy to Argentina (S)

At your request I have taken the main points in my memorandum to you and included them in a memorandum from you to Secretary of State Vance. Still, I recommend that you use the memorandum as talking points with the Secretary rather than send i I am gun-shy -- not to say paranoid -- about sending memos from here to other agencies. (S)

RECOMMENDATION:

Therefore, I recommend that you not send the memorandum at Tab I, but rather phone Secretary Vance.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

cc: Jessica Mathews

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Review on March 20, 1979

~~Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP~~

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP

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MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

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Date 2-5-80

SUBJECT: U.S. Policy to Argentina (S)

I understand that you are considering changing our approach to Argentina to reflect the lack of improvement there in human rights. I have read the INR report on the human rights situation in Argentina, and I agree that it is a sobering document. The human rights situation in Argentina may just be the worst in the hemisphere, but in deciding what approach the United States Government should take to Argentina, I believe we should address two questions:

(1) What is the most effective approach to Argentina to encourage them to respect human rights? (S)

(2) What approach will permit us to sustain in the U.S. our overall human rights policy? When we take actions toward Argentina, which are interpreted as punitive, we not only enrage the right-wing ideologues, we also arouse the business sector and the media in the U.S. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't necessarily take such steps if we feel that they are required, but it does suggest that we should move carefully and explain our position to a wide-ranging audience -- in the U.S. and elsewhere -- before taking any steps, least we jeopardize our overall human rights policy. (S)

Argentina is a big, proud and subtle country. We have an impact on Argentine government decisions, but it's never as direct or as much as we want. This is the case in our human rights policy. (S)

The Argentine government wants a warmer relationship with us at least in part because the U.S. under Carter has the prestige and the morality which could contribute to the idea that the Argentine military government is legitimate. Such legitimacy would undermine the civilians and the democrats in Argentina and therefore strengthen and contribute to the institutionalization of the military government. The Argentine government has pursued a two-track approach to try to get closer to the U.S.: (1) through lobbying and propaganda in the U.S., they have tried to undermine the credibility of our human rights

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decisions, but it's never as direct or as much as we want. This is the case of our human rights policy. (S)

The Argentine government wants a warmer relationship with us for three reasons: (1) our historical, reasonably close relationship; (2) the U.S. under Carter has the prestige and the morality which could contribute to the idea that the Argentine military government is legitimate; and (3) such legitimacy would undermine the civilians and the democrats in Argentina and therefore strengthen and contribute to the institutionalization of the military government. The Argentine government has pursued a two-track approach to try to get closer to the U.S.; (1) through lobbying and propaganda in the U.S., they have tried to undermine the credibility of our human rights policy, and (2) they have taken "baby steps" in the human rights area at home. I think our cool and correct posture has been as effective as any policy could be. I think negative steps as State envisages would not be any more effective with Argentina, and it would cause us serious problems in the U.S. (S)

In short, I would recommend that we maintain a cool and correct posture to Argentina, though we should continue to use every opportunity both directly and through third countries to encourage them to clean up their act. They will continue to try to lure high-level visitors, and we should resist that until progress is evident. (S)

But even if you believe as Vance and Christopher do, that we should take the negative steps outlined above, I would encourage delay. (S)

One could argue that we have been waiting for 18 months; what will several more months do? Four new factors argue for waiting a bit longer: (1) The Argentine government has been paralyzed by the Beagle Channel conflict for the past eight months; now that it's quiet, they have the opportunity to move. (2) Several of Argentina's most hard-line Generals have been transferred, and Videla and Viola are more secure than at any time before. (3) Argentina's Ambassador has just told Vaky that he thinks there is a good possibility of some progress on the human rights front over the next few months. And (4) the Inter-American Human Rights Commission is going there in May. We should wait and gear any new policy shifts to their report. That may mean a delay of six months or more.

RECOMMENDATION:

Vance has apparently decided to change our policy. I therefore recommend you call him and ask him to re-consider. If he remains convinced, you may want to ask him to delay a decision pending the IAHRC report.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

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cc: Jessica Mathews Views:

Bob is right that our primary concern should be what will work with Argentina. Our policy of the past year (abstention) certainly hasn't worked, and I have little expectation that prolonging it will change anything, despite the fact that the Beagle Channel dispute is over. On the other hand, a tougher posture probably won't work either. I suspect that in the near term nothing will work until and unless Videla gets much more secure or there is a strong change in Argentine public opinion.

However, there is one important consideration missing here, namely the relationship of Argentina to the rest of our human rights policy. As Bob points out, the situation in Argentina is the worst in the hemisphere and has even deteriorated in the past year (at least in relation to the terrorist threat if not in absolute numbers). While it is impossible to compare events in say Argentina and Indonesia, we do have to struggle to make the policy consistent insofar as we can, and by these standards there is a general consensus that we should be taking a firmer stand toward the GOA.

If neither posture is likely to be much more successful vis-a-vis the GOA, we should pick the one that is more consistent with the human rights policy — returning to the tougher "no" vote position.

Jim

Maybe
2B - *Maybe we should*
be friendly, strong then Videla
hand, and see if he then can
clean up his act. We would
also short term but it
might be worth it.

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[Signature]

Carter Library

NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

STAFF MATERIAL

North/South

PASTOR, Country

BOX: 1

Folder: ARGENTINA, 1-7/79